

**Annual report to the
Higher Education Funding Council for Wales**

from the

Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee

2008/09 - 2009/10

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Foreword by the Chair of the Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee

I am pleased to present this first annual report on behalf of all members, past and present, of the Council's Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee (SETQC). The report covers the period from SETQC's inaugural meeting in April 2009 to its last meeting of the 2009/10 academic year, in July 2010.

SETQC was established in 2009 following a review of the Council's sub-committee structure, which was initiated by Roger Thomas on his appointment as Chair of HEFCW in 2008. SETQC replaced the Council's former Learning and Teaching, Quality Assessment, and Widening Access Committees. The role of the Committee is to advise the Council on all matters relating to learning and teaching in higher education, including skills, widening access to higher education, Initial Teacher Training and Welsh medium provision, with the aim of ensuring that Welsh higher education meets the needs and expectations of learners and other stakeholders. It also undertakes the Council's statutory responsibilities under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 in respect of quality assessment.

The report covers a period of change for higher education (HE) in Wales. *For our Future: The 21st Century Higher Education Strategy and Plan for Wales (FoF)* was published in November 2009 with a tight associated timetable. *FoF* built on and replaced *Reaching Higher*, and provided a response to the *Jones Review of Higher Education*. In addition, the economic climate has presented substantial challenges to the sector. SETQC has advised Council in responding to the challenges of the new strategy in this economic climate. As this report will show, SETQC's first six meetings have been very much focused on this agenda, including offering advice to Council on the successful delivery of HEFCW's Corporate Strategy, the Assembly Government's priorities for Welsh HE, and the most effective way to deploy its funding to support HEIs in the delivery of an excellent student experience for all learners in Wales.

SETQC has already seen a number of changes in its membership. I would like to thank the following people who left the Committee in the period covered by this report: retired Council Member, Pauline Thomas; Ben Gray, former President of NUS Wales, Dr Carl Peters as former Chair of UCET Cymru, and former Welsh Assembly Government Observer, Mike Hopkins. A list of our current members and observers can be found at **Annex A**.

With the exception of the inaugural scene-setting meeting, all meetings to date have included an in-depth strategic discussion of a key topic, which has included expert guest contributions where appropriate. Debates have ranged across the breadth of the Committee's agenda, and covered themes as diverse as HEFCW's *Strategic Approach and Plan for Widening Access to Higher Education*, retention, and related issues; skills and employability; *For our Future*; and foundation degrees. Through this approach SETQC aims to keep abreast of key developments and programmes at a strategic level relevant to its remit, thus ensuring a current and evidence-informed base for the advice it provides to the Council.

In the context of policy imperatives around *For our Future*, this period saw the establishment of SETQC's first task and finish group, which informed the development of our *Strategic Approach to Widening Access*. I would like to thank all those who contributed to, and participated in, this group.

I commend this report to you, and in doing so thank all Members and observers of SETQC, past and present, for their contributions, work and enthusiasm over this period.

Professor Leni Oglesby

Membership and role of HEFCW's Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee

Introduction

- 1 The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) is an Assembly Sponsored Public Body, established in May 1992, which assumed responsibility for funding higher education in Wales on 1 April 1993. Our mission is to promote internationally excellent higher education in Wales, for the benefit of individuals, society and the economy, in Wales and more widely. Working with partners, we use funds from the Assembly and others to:
 - Secure higher education learning and research of the highest quality;
 - Maximise the contribution of higher education to the culture, society and economy of Wales;
 - Ensure high quality, accredited teacher training provision across Wales.
- 2 On 12 December 2008, following a review of HEFCW's committee structure initiated by its then newly appointed Chair, Roger Thomas, the Council approved a new committee structure. This new structure included a Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee (SETQC), that brought together the roles of the former Learning and Teaching Committee, Quality Assessment Committee and Widening Access Committee.
- 3 The remit of the SETQC, together with a list of current members, is provided at **Annex A**.

Review of business

- 4 Dates of the two meetings held in 2008/09 and the four held in 2009/10 are listed at **Annex B**, together with the date of the first joint meeting between SETQC and the Council's Research, Innovation and Engagement Committee (RIEC) and Reconfiguration and Collaboration Committee (RCC).
- 5 Key items considered over this period were:
 - **Widening access:** issues and future directions, approach and planning.
 - **Skills and Employability:** the first annual report of the Wales Employment and Skills Board; how critical or key aspects of the skills and employability agendas should be taken forward; evaluation of the effectiveness of links between HEIs and SSCs in Wales; recommendations for HE of the Careers Review commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government.
 - **Student Experience:** National Student Survey outcomes; information that should be provided by institutions on the costs of study; HEFCW guidance to institutions on refugees and asylum seekers; institutional equalities monitoring data from 2008/09, and its implications for the work of the Committee.
 - **Quality issues:** Quality Assurance in HEI provision, including the outcomes of institutional reviews and audits; the quality assessment of

Higher Education in Further Education Colleges; Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Handbook for the new Institutional Review: Wales process from 2009/10; Quality and standards in England and how recommendations there might impact on Wales; consideration of the QAA annual report; consideration of HEFCW's approach to quality enhancement, and recommendations of the Quality Working Group.

- **Learning and Teaching:** consideration of Higher Education Academy annual reports; development of HEFCW's foundation degrees policy; the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme; draft outcomes of the Universities UK and GuildHE Review of external examiners.
- **Welsh Medium higher education:** Development of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol.
- **Regional Planning:** development of a regional dimension to the planning and delivery of HE in Wales.
- **HEFCW's remit letters** for 2009-10 and 2010-11: their implications for the work of the Committee; review of the additional funding for part-time students.

6 This list evidences the breadth of the agenda which falls within the remit of SETQC. The Committee's business discussions are further informed by information papers, both regular and ad hoc. Amongst the former, SETQC members receive copies of all minutes and relevant papers from meetings of HEFCW's Research, Innovation and Engagement Committee. Ad hoc papers include updates on activities relevant to the Committee's remit. This has included areas such as HEFCW's Unsatisfactory Quality Procedures, Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship, modern foreign languages, enhancing learning and teaching through technology and Initial Teacher Training.

7 To deal with such a broad agenda, SETQC decided at its inaugural meeting to establish a practice of themed meetings. A strategic discussion theme is selected and addressed through small group discussions or a single, larger group, as appropriate to the theme. This is then followed by a business meeting to deal with the broader range of the Committee's remit. This approach provides for:

- One major policy issue for presentation and discussion in depth for around one and a half hours;
- Discussion of appropriate short business items involving specific proposals;
- No discussion of information papers unless specifically requested by a Member;
- Use of task and finish groups to address specific areas of activity where appropriate.

8 The key policy context for the period covered by this first annual report was the publication by the Welsh Assembly Government of *For our Future: The 21st Century Higher Education Strategy and Plan for Wales* in November 2009. SETQC meetings subsequent to the publication of this document have

focussed on how different aspects of the Committee's remit underpin the delivery of *For our Future*. In addition, the focus of SETQC's joint meeting with the Research, Innovation and Engagement, and Reconfiguration and Collaboration Committees was advising the Council on the shaping of its Corporate Strategy for 2010-11 to 2012-13 in order to deliver *For our Future*.

- 9 A key area of work for SETQC was advising the Council on the development of *HEFCW's Strategic Approach and Plan for Widening Access to Higher Education*, which sits beneath our Corporate Strategy and articulates more fully our widening access policy and initial actions. This was developed in response to a requirement in HEFCW's annual remit letter from the Welsh Assembly Government for 2009-10, and *For our Future's* focus on social justice. It was completed with the assistance of a task and finish group, drawn from members of the Committee and supplemented with external experts. Following extensive consultation with the sector and others, it was published in 2010/11¹.
- 10 SETQC played a key role in providing advice to Council on learning and teaching excellence and the student voice. It advised that Wales should participate in the National Teaching Fellowship Awards, which are co-ordinated by the Higher Education Academy, in order to raise the profile of learning and teaching excellence in Wales. Council agreed this recommendation, to take effect from 2010/11. In relation to the National Student Survey it recommended the following: results for franchise HE in FE provision be reported separately from 2010; HEFCW should investigate the inclusion of directly funded HE in FE provision in the survey; Welsh institutions should participate in the additional optional questions to the online survey from 2011; and HEFCW should ask Welsh institutions to provide employability information on the Unistats website. They also supported the publication and launch of the statement for the Wales Initiative for Student Engagement (WISE), a partnership between HEFCW, NUS Wales, the QAA, Higher Education Wales and the HE Academy. The Committee advised Council on the Minister on the costs of study, as required in HEFCW's 2009-10 remit letter. This was facilitated by the use of a small task and finish group, and resulted in the publication of a HEFCW circular providing guidelines to institutions on the provision of information on the cost of study².
- 11 A close working relationship is maintained with RIEC, with particular emphasis on the skills and employability agenda, which spans the remit of both Committees. This is achieved via attendance of a RIEC officer at SETQC meetings, coordination of strategic themes, the sharing of all relevant papers and presentations, and the sharing of the minutes of both Committees. SETQC and RIEC have advised Council on the development of HEFCW's foundation degree policy³. SETQC also provided advice on discussing a review of existing foundation degrees with the QAA. SETQC's advice on skills and employability has informed the work of the Wales Employment and Skills Board, and vice versa. A joint meeting of SETQC, RIEC and the RCC helped to build on this relationship between the committees.

¹ Circular W11/09HE: HEFCW's Strategic Approach and Plan for Widening Access to Higher Education 2010/11 to 2012/13

² Circular W10/07 HE Provision of information for students on costs of study

³ Circulate W10/29HE Foundation Degrees

- 12 The Committee also advised Council on HEFCW's statutory responsibilities for quality assessment. This included advice on the new QAA institutional review: Wales process, where some of the changes introduced for Wales - such as the enhanced role of institutional review facilitators and the introduction of a rolling process to enable enhancement of the review process - have subsequently been adopted for the review methodology for England and Northern Ireland. It also advised on how the selection of the review method for collaborative provision enabled HEFCW to meet its statutory responsibilities. It considered the confidence outcome judgements in relation to the institutional reviews of Swansea Metropolitan University, University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (UWIC); Cardiff University; Swansea University; the University of Glamorgan, and the overseas quality audit of the University of Wales and St. Petersburg Christian University (Russia). The Committee advised that HEFCW should consider asking the QAA to undertake a separate review of foundation degree provision. SETQC provided views on the production of a series of outcomes papers on the institutional review: Wales process to 2008/09, which are now available on the QAA website⁴. It advised on the development of a review method for directly funded HE in FE provision, and contributed to the development of QAA procedures for investigating concerns about standards and quality in higher education. SETQC also advised on the outcomes of the National Student Survey in Wales.

Forward Look

- 13 It is still early days for HEFCW's new committee structure. However, SETQC has already been called upon to offer advice to Council across the full breadth of its remit. The quality of the advice provided to date in areas such as HEFCW's *Strategic Approach and Plan for Widening Access to Higher Education* and the costs of study reflect the breadth and expertise of the Committee's membership. The Committee brings together expertise and different constituencies which is not achieved through any other mechanism in Wales. It provides a robust forum for discussion, which has facilitated the enhancement of strategic approaches to policy developments, and has proved valuable in providing advice to Council across the breadth of policy areas covered by the Committee, including in response to remit letter requirements. Items from SETQC are regularly, with agreement, brought for discussion to the HEW Pro Vice-Chancellors' Learning and Teaching Advisory Group, the views of which then inform future debates of the Committee. This approach enables wider views to inform SETQC in its work.
- 14 The academic year 2010/11 promises to continue to be a period of great change and challenge for the HE sector. These include:
- Changes to HE funding, student support, fee plans, and the cap on full-time undergraduate student numbers;

⁴ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/reviewWales/outcomes/default.asp>

- The student voice and student experience is becoming increasingly important and is likely to become a focus of discussion in relation to the other areas covered by SETQC;
- Diversity and flexibility of provision is likely to become of increasing importance to learners, in conjunction with the agenda for upskilling the workforce. In this context, *For our Future* identified that there would be greater use of the accreditation of prior learning, which will need to be considered by SETQC over the coming year;
- The review by the HE Academy of the Professional Standards Framework for Higher Education, and the issues around the professionalisation of HE teaching more generally will impact on the sector;
- The proposed restructuring of the HE Academy and its approach to subjects and disciplines will also be an area of change for the sector, which may have to work with the Academy in different ways;
- The regionalisation agenda is an area that is developing rapidly, with particular emphasis on collaboration, reducing duplication and nugatory competition, and progression arrangements;
- HEFCW will ask the sector to develop new Learning and Teaching and Widening Access Strategies for 2011/12 to 2013/14;
- Developments in England will impact on Wales, for example the Westminster Government's proposed white paper on HE, and changes to the institutional audit method in England and Northern Ireland;
- The Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol will be established and will influence the ways in which the HE sector develops and delivers Welsh medium provision;
- Equalities and disability issues continue to remain important, with issues such as child poverty, refugees and asylum seekers.

- 15 All these issues are likely to impact on student expectations and the importance of the student voice, with an increasing emphasis on quality assessment, student satisfaction and quality enhancement.
- 16 The next year will therefore be a busy one for SETQC. Its role will continue to be advising Council on addressing these challenges, in order to maintain and enhance the student experience in Wales, and enabling Wales to remain competitive.

Annex A. HEFCW Committee standing orders

A Membership and Attendance

1. The Council members and the Chair of the Committee shall be appointed by the Council. Council members shall serve for such period as the Council shall decide with other members appointed by the Appointments Committee for an initial period of up to three years.
2. With the approval of the Appointments Committee, non-Council members may serve a second three year period.
3. Upon taking up appointment to the Committee, non-Council members shall declare their interests by completing a declaration of interests form. The Register of all Members' interests shall be made available via the HEFCW website. If a member declares an interest in a matter to be considered at a meeting of the Committee, the disclosure shall be recorded in the minutes. Members with a direct interest in any item to be considered at a meeting of the Committee shall withdraw from the meeting during discussion of that item.
4. If a quorum is not present at a meeting of the Committee, the Chair or his/her nominee shall declare that there is not a quorum present and either decide that the meeting shall stand adjourned or proceed with the meeting but defer any decisions to the next quorate meeting . The consideration of any business not transacted shall be adjourned to a date and time to be fixed by the Chair or to the next meeting of the Committee.
5. The Chair shall nominate a Deputy - from the Council members - to Chair the Committee meeting in his/her absence.
6. The Chair of Council may attend Committee meetings as an observer.
7. Other HEFCW staff or external representatives may be invited to attend the meetings at the discretion of the Chair of the Committee.
8. Members nominated by external organisations may nominate a substitute to attend meetings in their stead. Substitutes' names will be recorded in the list of members at the commencement of their term.
9. The Appointments Committee may terminate the membership of any non-Council member who fails to attend three consecutive meetings.

B Frequency of Meetings

1. The Committee shall determine the frequency of meetings, subject to a minimum of one meeting per year.
2. At the request of the Chair, the Secretary shall convene a special meeting of the Committee to deal with business that cannot wait until the next ordinary meeting.
3. The Council or Accounting Officer may ask the Committee to convene further meetings to discuss particular issues on which they want the Committee's advice.

4. The Committee may also propose joint meetings with other Council committees as necessary.

C Reporting

1. Minutes of the meeting of the Committee will be circulated to the next meeting of the Council, normally for information. When the minutes include recommendations from the Committee for the Council to approve, these recommendations will be highlighted in the Council covering paper and presented for approval. Minutes will be marked 'unconfirmed' if the next Council meeting precedes the next ordinary meeting of the Committee.
2. If substantially changed at the next meeting of the Committee, the Minutes shall be returned to Council for information.
3. Where a meeting has taken place but a draft of the minutes is not available by the date of the next Council meeting, the Chair of the Committee will make an oral report to the Council and the minutes will be presented to the next meeting of the Council thereafter. The Chair will raise any significant matters with the Chair of Council and the Chief Executive, and may draw the attention of the Council to such matters at its next meeting.
4. The Committee will submit an annual report to Council on the discharge of its duties.

D Authority

1. The Committee is authorised to obtain independent professional advice if it considers this to be necessary, normally in consultation with the Chair of Council and/or HEFCW's Chief Executive. However, it may not incur direct expenditure in this respect in excess of £5,000 without the prior approval of the Council.
2. The Council, or Chair of Council, may delegate authority to the Committee Chair to conduct specific tasks on behalf of the Council.

E Review

1. The Committee Remit and membership shall be reviewed on an annual basis and any proposed changes submitted to Council for approval.

Annex B. Composition of Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee

Members

Council

Member of Council (Chair)

Two members of Council (and an additional invited Council member)

Appointments committee appointees

Four HE members

Nominees

Higher Education Wales (HEW) x 2

UCET Cymru (Initial Teacher Training)

Welsh Medium Higher Education Steering Group

NUS Wales

Alliance of Sector Skills Councils

National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare

Chair of a Reaching Wider Partnership

Colegau Cymru

NIACE Dysgu Cymru

Observers

DCELLS

HEW officer

QAA officer

Higher Education Academy officer

Centre for Welsh Medium in Higher Education

Estyn

Officers

Head of Strategy, Learning and Funding

Senior Learning and Teaching Managers (one of whom is Secretary)

Director of Strategic Development

Senior Widening Access Policy Manager

Senior Economic Development Manager

Strategic Development Officer (Clerk)

[Note: When meeting as QA committee majority need to be providing HE in institutions]

**Current Membership of Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee
(on 31 July 2010)**

Members	
Council	
Member of Council (Chair)	Professor Leni Oglesby
Two members of Council	Professor Mari Lloyd-Williams (Deputy Chair) Bethan Guilfoyle
Appointments committee appointees	
Four HE members	Julie Lydon (University of Glamorgan); Professor Danny Saunders (University of Glamorgan); Professor Dennis Thomas (Aberystwyth University); Rob Humphreys (Open University in Wales)
Nominees	
Higher Education Wales (HEW) x 2	Dr Peter Noyes (VC University of Wales, Newport); Jacqui Hare (PVC, University of Wales Institute, Cardiff)
UCET Cymru (Initial Teacher Training)	Professor John Parkinson
Welsh Medium Higher Education Steering Group	Meri Huws
NUS Wales	Katie Dalton
Alliance of Sector Skills Councils	Michelle Creed (Wales Director, LLUK)
National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare	Stephen Griffiths (Director, Workforce Development Unit)
Chair of a Reaching Wider Partnership	Professor Alan Speight (PVC, Swansea University)
Colegau Cymru	Gavin Thomas
NIACE Dysgu Cymru	Richard Spear
Observers	
DCELLS	Andrew Clark
HEW Officer	Lisa Newberry (Policy Advisor)
QAA Officer	Dr Julian Ellis (Officer for Wales)
Higher Education Academy officer	Sean Mackney (Deputy Chief Executive)
Centre for Welsh Medium in Higher Education	Dr Ioan Matthews (Director)
Estyn	Sarah Lewis
Officers	
Head of Strategy, Learning and Funding	Celia Hunt
Senior Learning and Teaching Managers	Dr Cliona O'Neill (Secretary) Dr Alison Allan (as appropriate)
Director of Strategic Development	Dr David Blaney
Senior Widening Access Policy Manager	Jane Johns
Senior Economic Development Manager	Dr Alyson Thomas
Strategic Development Officer	Gemma Long (Clerk)

2008/09 Meetings

29 April 2009

26 June 2009

2009/10 Meetings

21 October 2009

20 January 2010

24 March 2010

8 July 2010

A joint meeting of HEFCW's Student Experience, Teaching and Quality, Research, Innovation & Engagement and Reconfiguration and Collaboration Committees was also held on 12 March 2010